



**MPA Enforcement
International**



Enhancing Law Enforcement for the Caribbean Marine Environment

[Key West] (August 30, 2012) *Marine protected area managers and rangers from around the Caribbean came together in the Florida Keys for a week in August to share best practices for strengthening law enforcement for coral reef conservation.*

This is the first such regional effort to specifically address law enforcement needs of Caribbean marine protected areas (MPAs). An initiative of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) and NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (NOAA CRCP), the training is part of a series of activities in association with the Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network and Forum (CaMPAM) to support the sharing of effective MPA management experiences across international boundaries. Additional sponsorship was provided by the Caribbean Environment Program of the United Nations Environment Program and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The first activity of the series was a peer-to-peer workshop on strategies for sustainable financing for MPAs, conducted together with TNC at last year's GCFI meeting. Sustainable financing and MPA enforcement were the top two needs expressed by MPA managers in the 2011 Management Capacity Assessment of Selected Coral Reef Marine Protected Areas in the Caribbean (the full report is available online at <http://campam.gcfi.org/CapAssess/CaMPAMCapacityAssessment2011.pdf>).

The enforcement workshop hosted MPA management officials from the countries that participated in the MPA Management Capacity Assessment, and also included invitees from the Dominican Republic and St Barts in the French Caribbean, as well as an MPA enforcement expert from Guam. Instructors were provided by MPA Enforcement International, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC), with support from the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

The workshop received tremendous interest and, despite the passage of Hurricane Isaac, 22 MPA managers and rangers took part - from The Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Mexico, Belize and Honduras, the Dutch islands of Saba and Statia, and from St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada.

"Those who work on the frontlines of protecting the Caribbean's marine resources have a vitally important, but often daunting job to do" explains Ms Emma Doyle, GCFI's manager of support to MPAs, who highlighted the significance of conservation law enforcement training in the face of ever-increasing threats to the marine environment from over-fishing, visitor pressure, boat groundings, pollution and poaching.

Dr Billy Causey, Southeast Regional Director of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, which hosted the workshop at the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, affirmed "If we are to maintain the coral reef communities and the biologically diverse marine resources that depend upon them, then we need effective protection from illegal activities, and it is important that the public understands why protective measures are necessary."

The workshop provided an overview of the elements necessary for successful MPA enforcement. Classroom sessions and practical enforcement scenarios covered an array of issues, including deterrence and detection, surveillance, intelligence gathering, partnering with relevant organizations, and the role of community alert networks, as permitted by the realities of the MPA and the nature of its management, such as its size, remoteness, security, and levels of funding, staffing and infrastructure.

The group reviewed successful approaches to achieving compliance amongst fishers, yachters and tour operators, and considered examples of public outreach programs and education programs for kids in support of MPAs. The participants considered where they fit on a continuum of community involvement in MPA enforcement and desired next steps to enhance voluntary compliance with MPA regulations.

The participants expressed great interest in continued networking, as well as in developing standard operating procedures to guide responses to infringements of MPA rules and regulations, and for general officer safety, which was a recurring workshop theme. The US Lacey Act, which prohibits the import of protected species into the US, was also discussed as a tool for inter-agency collaboration in support of MPA enforcement in the Caribbean region.

The participants are now working with the organizers to develop possible follow-up activities at the regional and country level. Based on the energy levels at the workshop and the excellent sharing of practical experience, it is clear that Caribbean MPAs wish to continue law enforcement networking as a core element of MPA management.

For more information please contact Emma Doyle at emma.doyle@gcfi.org.



Participants in the conservation law enforcement training (Photo: E. Doyle)



Jayson Horadam and Aaron Smith running on board training with participants from Mexico (Photo: S. Frew)